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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

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TAGS: SREF, VM, CH

SUBJECT: SINO-VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AND SRV POLICIES TOWARD
ITS CHINESE COMMUNITIES

REF: (A) STATE 129286 (B) BANGKOK 14364 (C) BANGKOK 15598

SUMMARY: DURING EXTENSIVE INTERVIEWS IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS
IN THAILAND AND MALAYSIA, CHINESE REFUGEES FROM VIET-NAM EX-
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PRESSED DEEP ENXIETY OVER THE ECONOMIC POLICIES UNDERTAKEN
BY HANOI SINCE LATE MARCH. NEVERTHELESS, THEY CONSISTENTLY
STATE THAT THEY HAD MADE THE DECISION TO ESCAPE LONG BEFORE
THE MEASURES WERE ADOPTED. THIS SUGGESTS THAT THE REACTION TO
THESE ECONOMIC POLICIES HAS NOT YET BEEN REFLECTED IN
REFUGEE FLOW RATES. IMPLICATIONS FOR REFUGEE FLOW ALSO
DEPEND ON ANOTHER THREE VARIABLES: WEATHER, RESOURCES AND

SRV CAPACITY TO DETER ESCAPE. DESPITE BEING STUNNED OVER THE CHANGED SITUATION, MOST CHINESE REFUGEES CLAIM THAT THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICIES AT LEAST IN THE SOUTH ARE BEING ADMINISTERED UNIFORMLY TOWARD ETHNIC CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE. EXTRAPOLATING FROM THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES, THE REFUGEES DOUBT THAT HANOI IS DELIBERATELY TRYING TO FORCE CHINESE TO FLEE TO CHINA. INSTEAD, CHINESE IN NORTHERN VIET-NAM ARE REPORTEDLY BEING SUBJECTED TO THE SAME TRAUMA OVER THEIR MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD AS ARE CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE IN THE SOUTH AND ARE OPPOSED TO MOVING TO THE NEW ECONOMIC ZONES IN THE SOUTH. THEIR DECISIONS ON THEIR FUTURES ARE BEING MADE IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF TENSION, RUMOR AND BEWILDERMENT. WE ALSO FOUND FEWER ETHNIC CHINESE AMONG RECENT ARRIVALS IN THAILAND THAN WE HAD ANTICIPATED. THE OVERALL RATE FOR MALAYSIA, WHERE MOST OF THE NEW REFUGEES GO, AND THAILAND TOGETHER, HOWEVER, APPEARS ROUGHLY AROUND 60 PERCENT OF TOTAL. END SUMMARY.

1. DATA SAMPLE - WE HAVE INTERVIEWED AT LENGTH BETWEEN MAY 19 AND JUNE 1 ETHNIC CHINESE REFUGEES FROM VIET-NAM WHO HAVE ARRIVED IN LAEM SING AND SONGKHLA, THAILAND, AND IN PULAU BESAR, MALAYSIA. IN THAILAND, WE SPOKE WITH THIRTY PERSONS, REPRESENTING DIFFERENT FAMILY GROUPS TOTALLING 130 PERSONS. MOST ARRIVED IN MAY, ALTHOUGH A FEW ARRIVED IN LATE APRIL. IN PULAU BESAR, MALAYSIA, WE SPOKE WITH 20 PERSONS, REPRESENTING DIFFERENT FAMILY GROUPS

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TOTALLING 117 PERSONS. ALL ARRIVED AFTER MAY 17; MANY OF THEM ARRIVED MAY 28.

2. THE OVERALL PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC CHINESE ARRIVALS OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS REMAINS HIGH. IN MALAYSIA, CAMP OFFICIALS AND THE UNHCR REP ESTIMATE THAT 58 PERCENT OF THE JUNE 1 CAMP POPULATION OF 5800 WAS CHINESE. THE AVERAGE MONTHLY ARRIVAL RATE SINCE JANUARY IN MALAYSIA OF BOAT CASES, INCLUDING ALL ETHNIC GROUPS, WAS OVER 2000. EMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR REFUGEE OFFICER ESTIMATES THAT ETHNIC CHINESE COMPOSITION RATES RANGE BETWEEN FIFTY AND SIXTY PERCENT FOR NEW ARRIVALS.

3. WHILE THE PROPORTION OF CHINESE IN THAI BOAT CASE CAMPS REMAINS OVER FIFTY PERCENT, THE ACTUAL NUMBERS OF CHINESE WHO ARRIVED IN APRIL AND MAY WAS CLOSER TO 30 PERCENT. OF THE 752 REFUGEES WHO ARRIVED IN LAEM SING IN APRIL AND MAY, 220, OR 30 PERCENT, COULD BE IDENTIFIED AS ETHNICALLY CHINESE. IN SONGKHLA, OF THE 774 WHO ARRIVED IN APRIL AND THROUGH MAY 20, 228, OR 30 PERCENT, WERE IDENTIFIABLE AS OF CHINESE ORIGIN. THESE FIGURES WERE OBTAINED BY GOING THROUGH THE CAMP RECORDS CASE BY CASE WITH THE

VIETNAMESE AND SINO-VIETNAMESE CAMP LEADERS. UNHCR REP TOLD US THAT HIS FIGURES OF ETHNIC CHINESE ARRIVALS SHOW SIMILAR DROPS IN THE PAST TWO MONTHS. THIS DROP IN ETHNIC CHINESE ARRIVALS IN THAILAND IN APRIL AND MAY IS PROBABLY A TEMPORARY ABERRATION.

4. IN THIS CONNECTION, ROUGHLY 90 PERCENT OF THE CHINESE INTERVIEWED IN THAILAND AND FIFTY PERCENT IN MALAYSIA SAID THEY WANTED TO GO TO AUSTRALIA. SEVERAL CITED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND THE SLOWNESS OF OPERATION OF THE U.S. PROGRAMS AS REASONS FOR THIS PREFERENCE.

5. RECENT REFUGEES INCLUDE A BROAD MIX OF SMALL AND LARGE BUSINESSMEN (USUALLY CHINESE), FORMER GVN SOLDIERS, FARMERS, CONFIDENTIAL

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TAILORS, FISHERFOLK, FISH SAUCE MAKERS, STUDENTS AND THREE ACUPUNCTURISTS. ALTHOUGH A MAJORITY ARE FAMILY GROUPS, MANY YOUNG PEOPLE ARRIVE, ALONE OR WITH A SIBLING. RECENT ARRIVALS COME PRIMARILY FROM PHY QUOC ISLAND, RACH GIA, AND THE HA TIEN AREA, SOC TRANG, CAMAU, CAN THO, PHAN THIET AND SAIGON-CHOLON. CHINESE ARRIVE FROM ALL THESE AREAS, BUT THE LARGEST NUMBERS COME FROM CHOLON.

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6. MOTIVATION OF THE CHINESE REFUGEES - VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE REFUGEES SAID THAT THEY HAD PLANNED TO ESCAPE VIETNAM FOR MANY MONTHS OR FOR A YEAR OR TWO. ONLY THREE SAID THAT THE MOVES AGAINST CAPITALISM SINCE MARCH 23 HAD ACTUALLY PRECIPITATED THEIR DEPARTURE. WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, WHERE SOMEONE WAS FORTUITOUSLY INVITED TO JOIN A DEPARTING BOAT AT THE LAST MINUTE, THE REFUGEES SAID THAT THEY HAD WORKED AND PLANNED FOR LONG PERIODS TO ARRANGE ESCAPE AND TO OBTAIN THE MEANS TO DO SO. TYPICALLY, ONE REFUGEE SAID TO US

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INITIALLY THAT THE PRIMARY REASON FOR THE UPSURGE IN DEPARTURES FROM VIETNAM WAS THE CRACKDOWN ON "CAPITALIST TRADERS." HE THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT IT TOOK AT LEAST THREE MONTHS TO ARRANGE AN ESCAPE. IN THE CASE OF HIS OWN BOAT, WITH 57 PERSONS, THE GROUP HAD PURCHASED A BOAT COOPERATIVELY TWO YEARS AGO AND HAD BEEN FOILED THREE TIMES WHEN ESCAPES WERE SCHEDULED. THE BOAT WAS EVEN PROVISIONED WITH FOOD, ETC., IN FEBRUARY, BUT THE DEPARTURE WAS DELAYED WHEN THE BOAT CAPTAIN CHANGED HIS MIND ABOUT FLEEING.

7. THE DESIRE FOR FREEDOM IS USUALLY THE FIRST REASON CITED, ALMOST PRO FORMA, FOR ESCAPE. INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT, OPPRESSIVE ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES, PUNCTUATED BY THE OMNIPRESENT EXHORTATION TO GO TO THE NEW ECONOMIC ZONES (NEZ), ARE THEN NAMED AS A PRIMARY REASON FOR FLEEING VIETNAM. ALL SPOKE IN DIRE TERMS OF THE PROSPECT OF GOING TO NEZ'S. ALL ANTICIPATED BEING FORCED EVENTUALLY TO GO TO THE NEZ'S. WHILE MANY HAD THUS FAR RESISTED, GOVERNMENT THREATS TO FORMER CAPITALISTS, THE BOURGEOISIE AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED WHO DID NOT SOON COMPLY, HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY MENACING. THEY UNIFORMLY DESCRIBED THE LOCATIONS OF NEZ'S AS ALMOST UNINHABITABLE, WITH POOR LAND, FEW IMPLEMENTS, LITTLE GOVERNMENT SUPPORT, INADEQUATE MEDICINE, NO WATER WELLS AND THE CHANCES OF SURVIVING BLEAK. INSTEAD OF 6 MONTHS SUPPLY OF FOOD, ONLY AN INITIAL ALLOTMENT IS PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT. REFUGEES REPORTED HAVING HEARD OF MANY DEATHS IN THE NEZ'S BECAUSE OF INADEQUATE FOOD, NO MEDICINES AND HARD LABOR.

THE OLD AND THE VERY YOUNG ARE MOST VULNERABLE. A 54 YEAR OLD RACH GIA RICE MERCHANT SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH HE HAD DECIDED LONG BEFORE THAT HE WOULD SOMEDAY HAVE TO LEAVE, THE "ABOLITION OF CAPITALIST TRADERS" WAS DECISIVE IN TIMING OF HIS ESCAPE.

HE WAS ABOUT TO BE FORCED TO GO TO THE NEZ NEAR HA TIEN.

"IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE," HE SAID, "I AM TOO WEAK, TOO OLD AND COULD NOT START A NEW LIFE UNDER SUCH DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES."

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A REFUGEE FROM CHOLON CALLED THE NEZ'S "GRAVES."

8. AFTER MENTIONING THE THREAT OF NEZ'S, OTHERS ALSO SPOKE OF THE TIGHT CONTROL BEING EXERCISED IN THE SOUTH BY NORTH VIETNAMESE CADRES WHO HAVE REPLACED THE FORMER SOUTHERN COMMUNIST CADRES EVEN DEEP INTO CAMAU (VIETNAM'S SOUTHERN TIP). SEVERAL MEN WHO SERVED IN THE GVN MILITARY SAID THAT THEY HAD LOST PERMANENTLY ALL RIGHTS OF CITIZENSHIP, ACCESSIBILITY TO EMPLOYMENT, AND, THUS, ANY FUTURE. COMMUNIST AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT PERMITTED A DOCTOR WITH A BROTHER IN THE U S TO PRACTICE MEDICINE, BECAUSE OF HIS "BOURGEOIS CONNECTIONS IN THE U S." NEVERTHELESS, THE NEZ WAS AN UNACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE FOR THESE REFUGEES. A 22 YEAR OLD WOMAN FROM CAN THO POINTED TO THE ANTI-URBAN FEATURES OF SRV POLICY. "THE GOVERNMENT WANTS ALMOST EVERYONE TO MOVE TO THE RURAL AREAS TO FARM. IF YOU REFUSE, THEY TAKE YOUR RICE, OTHER FOOD, MONEY, HOME. WITH NO MEANS TO LIVE, YOU ARE FORCED TO ACQUIESCE, OR FLEE," WHICH SHE SAID SHE HAD TRIED TWICE BEFORE.

9. EARLIER THIS SPRING, WE FREQUENTLY HEARD FROM THE MANY DRAFT-AGED MALES WHO ARRIVED THAT THEY DID NOT WISH TO BE CONSCRIPTED TO FIGHT HANOI'S WAR WITH CAMBODIA. THE DRAFT WAS MENTIONED FAR LESS FREQUENTLY IN THIS SERIES OF INTERVIEWS. MOST CHINESE YOUTHS FROM CHOLON SAID THAT THEY HAD NOT BEEN CALLED FOR CONSCRIPTION. THEY USUALLY ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WOULD NOT WANT TO GO IF CALLED AND WOULD PROBABLY FIND SOME MEANS NOT TO DO SO. OPPOSITION TO CONSCRIPTION, HOWEVER, WAS MENTIONED BY SEVERAL AS ONE OF THE REASONS BEHIND THE MARCH 19 DEMONSTRATION IN CHOLON (REF C).

10. METHODS AND ROUTES OF ESCAPE - ESCAPE THROUGH HA TIEN, RACH GIA, CAMAU AND PHU QUOC IS MOST COMMON. MOST PEOPLE FLEEING FROM SAIGON-CHOLON USE THESE EXIT POINTTS. VUNG TAU IS CONSIDERED TOO DANGEROUS, SINCE CAPTURE IS COMMON. A TRICKLE OF PERSONS ESCAPE FROM PHAN THIET, BINH TUY, NHA TRANG AND DANANG. ONE FAMILY FROM HUE ARRIVED RECENTLY VIA RACH GIA. OTHERS SAILED

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DIRECTLY FROM CAN THO. SEVERAL REFUGEES ESTIMATED THAT EIGHTY PERCENT OF THOSE TRYING TO ESCAPE ARE CAUGHT. THE REFUGEES CLAIM THAT ONLY HALF WHO MANAGE TO ESCAPE COMMUNIST PATROLS ARE THOUGHT TO SUCCEED IN FINDING FOREIGN HAVEN, WITH THE OTHERS DROWNING.

11. TYPICALLY, SOMEONE WHO WISHES TO ESCAPE FINDS OUT WHO CAN BE TRUSTED, HAS A BOAT, AND IS PREPARING AN ESCAPE. FREQUENTLY, ESPECIALLY IN THE FISHING VILLAGES OF HA TIEN, RACH GIA, PHU QUOC, AND CAMAU, PEOPLE BAND TOGETHER, PLAN AND EXECUTE AN ESCAPE. RELATIVES FROM SAIGON-CHOLON FREQUENTLY JOIN THESE FAMILY/FRIEND JOINT ESCAPE PLANS. USUALLY THOSE INVITED OR ENLISTED TO JOIN ARE RELATIVES OR OTHERS WHO ARE KNOWN TO OPPOSE THE PRESENT REGIME. SOME PERSONS GOODHEARTEDLY MERELY INVITE FRIENDS ALONG, SOMETIMES AT THE LAST MINUTE. IN A "PACKAGE DEAL" FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT LIVE IN THE WESTERN FISHING VILLAGES, ESCAPEES ARE ADVISED WHEN TO ARRIVE, FOR EXAMPLE, IN RACH GIA, AND TOLD WHERE TO STAY FOR ONE OR TWO NIGHT BEFORE DEPARTING. UNKNOWN COLLABORATORS PROVIDE SAFE HOUSES. SMALL BOATS FERRY THE REFUGEES TO A LARGER CRAFT WAITING OFF-SHORE OR IN RIVERINE HIDEOUTS.

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12. THE COST FOR A "PACKAGE DEAL" VARIES FROM NOTHING TO 3 TO 5 TAELS OF GOLD IN FISHING VILLAGES TO 10 OR 11 TAELS IN SAIGON-CHOLON. (ONE Tael IS 37.5 GRAMS.) ONE REFUGEE SAID HE PAID 15 TAELS. CHILDREN GO AT HALF PRICE. THE GOLD IS PAID TO A REFUGEE ENTREPRENEUR WHO IS USUALLY ARRANGING HIS OWN ESCAPE AND NEEDS HELP TO PURCHASE A BOAT AND SUPPLIES. THE PACKAGE USUALLY INCLUDES A PASS TO VISIT A RELATIVE IN A FISHING VILLAGE. A SIZEABLE PROPORTION OF THE REFUGEES INTERVIEWED SAID THAT THEY CAME WITH

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RELATIVES AND PAID LITTLE OR NOTHING FOR THE VOYAGE.

13. REFUGEES GENERALLY AND EMPHATICALLY DENIED THAT THERE WAS ANY DIRECT COLLUSION WITH OR BRIBERY OF COMMUNIST CADRES INVOLVED IN THEIR ESCAPE. MANY INDICATED SHOCK AT THE QUESTION. ONE BOAT OWNER WHO BROUGHT 49 PERSONS WITH HIM SAID HE WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED IF THE GOVERNMENT OR ITS CADRES KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING. ANOTHER SAID THAT IF COMMUNIST CADRES WERE AWARE THAT HE HOPED TO ESCAPE, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN KILLED. ANOTHER BOAT OWNER, WHO BROUGHT 44 PERSONS WITH HIM, DENIED "ABSOLUTELY" THAT HE HAD ANY CONTACT WITH OR BRIBED GOVERNMENT CADRES. IF IT HAD BEEN KNOWN THAT HE WAS OUTFITTING A BOAT TO ESCAPE, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN 10-20 YEARS IN PRISON, HE ASSERTED. HOWEVER, ONE KNOWLEDGEABLE FORMER CIA EMPLOYEE SAID THAT SOME OF THE BOATS BRIBED CHECK POINT POLICE TO "LOOK THE OTHER WAY" WHEN THE BOAT PASSED. SOME COMMUNIST CADRES ACCEPT THE BRIBES, THEN STOP THE BOAT AND ROB THE REFUGEES, WHO GENERALLY CARRY QUANTITIES OF GOLD ON THEIR ESCAPE. OTHER REFUGEES SAID THAT EVEN THOUGH BRIBERY IS COMMON IN ARRANGING TRAVEL PASSES, FAKE CONTRACTS, BOAT REGISTRY, ETC., BRIBERY EXPLICITLY FOR ESCAPE IS RARE BECAUSE IT IS SO DANGEROUS.

14. SEVERAL REFUGEES COMMENTED THAT THEY WERE WELL AWARE OF THE DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS INVOLVED IN TRYING TO ESCAPE. THEY KNEW THAT, EVEN IF THEY ELUDED COMMUNIST PATROLS, THEY WOULD BE FACED WITH LACK OF FOOD AND WATER, A PHYSICALLY EXHAUSTING VOYAGE, AND, AT THE END, THAI PIRATES, WHO ROB THE REFUGEES AT KNIFE OR GUN POINT OF THE FEW POSSESSIONS OR GOLD WITH WHICH THEY MANAGED TO

ESCAPE. REFUGEES REGULARLY SAID THAT THEIR BOATS WERE RAIDED, FREQUENTLY AS MANY AS FIVE TIMES, BEFORE REACHING

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THAI SHORES. NEVERTHELESS, NINETY PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE IN SAIGON-CHOLON, ACCORDING TO SEVERAL REFUGEES, WISH TO FLEE AND HOPE TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO.

15. SRV POLICIES TOWARD CHINESE IN THE SOUTH - THE CHINESE REFUGEES INTERVIEWED, WITH ONLY A FEW EXCEPTIONS, STATED THAT THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICIES OF THE SRV WERE BEING EXECUTED EQUALLY AND WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION TOWARD ETHNIC CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE. MORE CHINESE WERE AFFECTED BECAUSE MORE CHINESE WERE BUSINESS PEOPLE OR HAD MORE MONEY, BUT, THEY ASSERTED, RECENT POLICY INNOVATIONS IN THE SOUTH WERE INDISCRIMINATELY ADMINISTERED.

16. ONE DISSENTER ON THE SUBJECT OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHINESE OF SRV POLICIES, WAS A 20 YEAR-OLD CHINESE YOUTH FROM CHOLON (REF C). HE POSSIBLY WAS THE MOST HONEST. HE CHARGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT TREATS CHINESE VERY BADLY. "THEY CONSTANTLY CALL FOR THIS OR THAT. YOU ARE CALLED TO MEETINGS REPEATEDLY. THEY GRILL YOU ON YOUR THOUGHTS. NORTHERN CADRES WHO HAVE REPLACED THE SOUTHERNERS ARE EVEN WORSE." (NOTE: WE SUSPECT THAT MANY VIETNAMESE WOULD MAKE SIMILAR CHARGES.)

17. SRV ECONOMIC POLICIES - ON MARCH 23-24, CONCURRENTLY WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF REGULATIONS ABOLISHING "CAPITALIST TRADE", YOUNG CADRES ENTERED MOST SHOPS THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH AND INVENTORIED ALL PROPERTY AND MATERIAL GOODS. SHOP OWNERS WERE INFORMED THAT STOCKS WERE BEING SEIZED BY THE STATE. THE POLICY WAS CARRIED OUT IN CONFORMITY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF "SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION." FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES WERE ANNOUNCED SUBSEQUENTLY. BUSINESSES WERE ORDERED TO LIST INCOME FROM 1970-1975 AND THEN ORDERED TO PAY "BACK TAXES" WHICH CONSUMED MOST OF THE SAVINGS MANY FAMILIES HAD. MERCHANTS WERE TOLD THAT THEY WOULD HAVE TO MOVE QUICKLY TO NEZ'S. REPORTS VARY ON WHEN. SOME REFUGEES SAY THAT THEY WERE TOLD THEY MUST GO TO NEZ'S

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IMMEDIATELY. OTHERS SAY THEY HAD TO GO WITHIN 15 DAYS OR BY MAY 15. THEY WERE WARNED THAT FAILURE TO GO WOULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OF ALL PERSONAL GOODS, MONEY, HOMES, ETC. MANY HAVE REFUSED TO GO OR DELAYED DEPARTURE, BUT

THE GOVERNMENT, REFUGEES SAY, APPEARS EARNEST ABOUT FORCING URBANITES QUICKLY TO RURAL AREAS. COMPANION MEASURES, SUCH AS THE UNIFICATION OF THE CURRENCY AND THE SEIZURE OF ALL WEALTH, FOLLOWED. FAMILIES WERE PERMITTED TWO HUNDRED DONG EACH. ALL OTHER WEALTH WAS SEIZED. THE TWO HUNDRED DONG COULD BE SUPPLEMENTED BY EARNINGS FROM FUTURE LABOR. SEVERAL REFUGEES SAID THAT MANY CHINESE HAD COMMITTED SUICIDE AS A RESULT OF THIS AND THE EARLIER CURRENCY CHANGES. THE REFUGEES DESCRIBED THESE MEASURES AS DESIGNED TO: ELIMINATE THE CAPITALIST CLASS; EQUALIZE ALL PERSONS FINANCIALLY; ELIMINATE ACCUMULATION OF WEALTH; FORCE DITY DWELLERS TO GO TO RURAL NEZ'S AND BECOME FARMERS. REACTION AMONG THE MIDDLE CLASS TO THESE POLICIES WAS ALMOST UNIVERSALLY NEGATIVE, ACCORDING TO THE REFUGEES.

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18. ONE DOCTOR FROM SAIGON TOOK A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT VIEW. HE BELIEVES THAT A MAJOR FACTOR BEHIND THE GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC POLICIES IS CONCERN ABOUT SECURITY. CONCENTRATIONS OF THOSE OPPOSED TO THE GOVERNMENT, AS MOST URBAN VIETNAMESE AND CHINESE ARE, REPRESENT A SECURITY THREAT. IN NEZ'S, COMMUNIST AUTHORITIES CAN KEEP THE PEOPLE UNDER CONTROL, HE COMMENTED.

19. SRV POLICIES TOWARD CHINESE IN THE NORTH - WHILE MANY RURAL CHINESE REFUGEES HAD NOT HEARD OF THE RECENT MASS

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EXODUS OF CHINESE TO THE PRC, THOSE FROM CHOLON WERE ALL AWARE OF THE DEVELOPMENT. THEY VENTURED A VARIETY OF OPINIONS ON THE SUBJECT. A FEW THOUGHT THAT HANOI MAY HAVE CREATED AN OPPRESSIVE ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO FEAR AND DEPARTURE ON THE PART OF CHINESE. MOST, HOWEVER THOUGHT THAT IT WAS UNLIKELY THAT HANOI WAS DELIBERATELY FORCING THE CHINESE TO DEPART. THE CHINESE ARE THOUGHT TO BE DEPARTING ILLEGALLY. ONE OF THE MORE EXOTIC EXPLANATIONS CAME FROM A CHINESE YOUTH FROM CHOLON, WHO SAID THAT HANOI WOULD "LOSE FACE" IF MASSES OF PEOPLE LEFT THE COUNTRY. IT WOULD MAKE THE SRV APPEAR "BACKWARD" INTERNATIONALLY AND UNABLE TO CONTROL ITS CITIZENS, PERCEPTIONS HANOI WOULD CERTAINLY WISH TO AVOID. A MINORITY THOUGHT THAT HANOI WAS REACTING TO PEKING'S SUPPORT FOR CAMBODIA IN CREATING A CLIMATE OF FEAR FOR CHINESE IN NORTH VIETNAM. ONE BRIGHT, ARTICULATE FORMER EMPLOYEE OF THE U S COMPANY, NATIONAL CASH REGISTER, HAD HEARD THAT A LARGE GROUP OF CHOLON CHINESE HAD APPLIED THROUGH THE GOVERNMENT IN HANOI FOR PERMISSION TO EMIGRATE TO THE PRC. PERMISSION WAS NOT EXPECTED TO BE GRANTED.

20. OF THOSE EXPRESSING OPINIONS, MOST BELIEVE THAT HANOI IS PURSUING POLICIES IN THE NORTH SIMILAR AND DIRECTLY RELATED TO THOSE IN THE SOUTH. OFFICIALS ARE CRACKING DOWN HARSHLY ON REMNANTS OF "THE CAPITALIST CLASS" E.G., SMALL VENDORS, RESTAURANTEURS, WHO ARE FREQUENTLY CHINESE, AND TRYING TO FORCE THEM TO MOVE TO NEZ'S IN THE SOUTH. THE SWIFT CRACKDOWN AND THE PROSPECTS OF BEGINNING LIFE ANEW IN THE SOUTHERN NEZ'S ARE EXTREMELY UNATTRACTIVE. LIKE SOUTHERNERS, THE NORTHERN CHINESE CAN NO LONGER MAKE A LIVING. ONE REFUGEE HAD HEARD FROM RELATIVES FROM NORTH VIETNAM THAT CHINESE HAD "LONG BEEN DESCIMINATED AGAINST. THEY COULD HOLD NO MEANINGFUL JOBS IN THE HANOI ADMINISTRATION AND FREQUENTLY COULD ONLY BE EMPLOYED AS COOLIES." MOREOVER, RUMORS DERIVING FROM TENSIONS IN SINO-VIETNAMESE

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RELATIONS COMPOUND FEARS AND LEAD THE FRIGHTENED CHINESE TO FLEE TO THE PRC. ELABORATING ON THIS THEME, ONE THOUGHTFUL FORMER RVNAF AIR CONTROLLER FROM CAMAU SPECULATED THAT HANOI HAS BEEN DISMAYED BY THE CORRUPTION OF NORTHERN CADRES SENT TO THE MUCH MORE PROSPEROUS SOUTH. THE CORRUPTION SPREAD QUICKLY TO THE NORTH, LEADING HANOI TO DECIDE THAT A RUTHLESS CRACKDOWN WAS ESSENTIAL. ANOTHER POINT MADE BY SEVERAL REFUGEES WAS THAT MANY OF THE CHINESE MAY BE FLEEING TO THE PRC AS A FIRST STAGE ATTEMPT TO GO TO HONG KONG AND, ULTIMATELY, TO THE U.S.

21. THE STRENGTH OF THIS LOGIC, IN THE SOUTH AS WELL AS NORTH, WAS EXPRESSED BY THREE COLLEGE-EDUCATED VIETNAMESE SECRETARIES FROM SAIGON. ASKED IF CHINESE IN CHOLON WOULD BE WILLING TO BOARD PRC SHIPS TO GO TO CHINA IF SUCH SHOWED UP IN HO CHI MINH CITY, THE THREE REPLIED THAT VIETNAMESE AS WELL AS CHINESE WOULD GO. "WE HAVE HEARD ON VOA," THEY SAID, "THAT CHINA AND THE U.S. ARE FRIENDS. WE KNOW THAT VIETNAM IS A FRIEND OF THE SOVIET UNION AND WE DO NOT LIKE THE RESULTS." ACCORDING TO THIS LOGIC, THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO GO TO CHINA, IN THE HOPE THAT BECAUSE OF SINO-U.S. FRIENDSHIP THEY MIGHT SOMEDAY BE ABLE TO GO TO THE U.S.

22. COMMENT: DESIRE FOR FREEDOM, ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION AND OPPRESSIVE ECONOMIC POLICIES, INCLUDING FORCED RELOCATION TO NEW ECONOMIC ZONES AND, TO A MUCH LESSER EXTENT, CONSCRIPTION ARE THE REASONS CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE ARE FLEEING SOUTH VIETNAM. IN BROAD TERMS, REFUGEES FLEE BECAUSE OF THE PERCEPTION THAT CONDITIONS WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY CONSTRICTED AND DIFFICULT. THESE PERCEPTIONS ARE REINFORCED BY DEEP ANGER AND FRUSTRATION OVER THE FATE OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND ITS PEOPLE. THESE INTERVIEWS INDICATE THAT NEW ECONOMIC POLICIES IN THE SRV ARE NOT YET A FACTOR IN THE UPSURGE IN BOAT CASE REFUGEES FROM VIETNAM. THE TRAUMA IN VIETNAM CAUSED BY EVENTS SINCE MARCH 23 IS UPPERMOST IN THE REFUGEES' MINDS. MOREOVER, THE CONSISTENT RESPONSE WE HEARD, THAT THE DECISION TO ESCAPE WAS MADE LONG AGO BY MOST NEW ARRIVALS, LEADS US TO BELIEVE THAT RECENT EVENTS ARE LIKELY TO INFLUENCE FUTURE BOAT CASE CONFIDENTIAL

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LEVELS, GIVEN THE TIME NECESSARY TO ARRANGE ESCAPES AFTER THE DECISION TO FLEE IS MADE.

23. WHILE THE DESIRE TO FLEE AMONG CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE MAY INCREASE AS A RESULT OF THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICIES IN THE SRV, THE MEANS TO DO SO MAY BE REDUCED PROGRESSIVELY. CONTROL WILL INEVITABLY BE GREATER ONCE THE FORMER CAPITALISTS ARE RESETTLED IN NEZ'S. ALTHOUGH MANY PEOPLE IN VIETNAM HAVE BURIED GOLD, MOST WILL HAVE LOST THE FUNDS OR OTHER WEALTH REQUIRED TO PURCHASE THEIR ESCAPE. MOREOVER, IT WILL TAKE TIME TO ESTABLISH TRUSTWORTHY CONNECTIONS TO ARRANGE DEPARTURE. THERE IS ALSO WIDESPREAD ANTICIPATION

AMONG REFUGEES OF EARLY NATIONALIZATION OF

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05 OMB-01 EB-08 TRSE-00
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P R 070315Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5827

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

FISHING BOATS. (COMMERCIAL BOATS HAVE ALREADY BEEN
NATIONALIZED.) THIS WILL ADD TO THE DIFFICULTIES OF
ESCAPE, ALTHOUGH BOATS WILL STILL BE MANNED BY POTENTIAL
ESCAPEES WHO, AS SEVERAL REFUGEES SAID, COULD TOSS OVER
THE FANTAIL SECURITY OFFICIALS WHO MIGHT BE ASSIGNED TO
THE BOATS. SMALLER, NON-SEAGOING BOATS MIGHT NOT BE
NATIONALIZED WHICH, ALTHOUGH MORE DANGEROUS, MIGHT STILL
BE USED TO ESCAPE. ALTHOUGH SRV AUTHORITIES ARE APPARENTLY
MAKING MAJOR EFFORTS TO THWART ESCAPES, DURING THIS
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TRANSITIONAL PERIOD IN VIET-NAM, CONDITIONS WILL PROBABLY BE SUFFICIENTLY CHAOTIC TO ACCOMMODATE ESCAPE. OVERALL, WE ANTICIPATE A CONTINUED, HIGH RATE OF EXODUS WHICH FOR CLIMATIC REASONS MAY DROP IN JULY AND AUGUST, BUT COULD ACCELERATE IN THE AUTUMN. WE ASSUME THAT THE RELATIVELY LOW PERCENTAGE OF ETHNIC CHINESE ARRIVALS IN THAILAND IN APRIL AND MAY IS PROBABLY A TEMPORARY PHENOMENON.

24. CONCERNING SRV POLICIES TOWARD THE CHINESE IN NORTH VIET-NAM, THE REFUGEES ARE OBVIOUSLY EXTRAPOLATING FROM THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES TO ASSESS THE REASONS CHINESE IN THE NORTH ARE FLEEING TO CHINA. WE TENTATIVELY BELIEVE THAT THEIR CONCLUSIONS MAY BE CORRECT, I.E., THAT HANOI'S NEW ECONOMIC POLICIES HAVE STUNNED THOSE AFFECTED AND PRESENT THE "CAPITALIST" REMNANTS WITH FEW ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVES. BOTH PEKING AND HANOI MAY HAVE BEEN GUILTY OF FEEDING RUMOR MILLS AND CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF PANIC WHICH IMPELLED THE NORTHERN CHINESE TO HEAD INTO CHINA. ONCE THE FLIGHT STARTED, IT EASILY SNOWBALLED.

25. AS FOR DISCRIMINATORY POLICIES TOWARD CHINESE IN THE SOUTH, WE THINK THAT A DISTINCTION MUST BE MADE BETWEEN THE POLICIES THEMSELVES AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY ARE IMPLEMENTED. VIETNAMESE AND CHINESE MERCHANTS MAY BE GIVEN THE SAME ORDERS, BUT THE MANNER IN WHICH THE ORDERS ARE DELIVERED COULD MAKE A GREAT DEAL OF DIFFERENCE IN THE EFFECTS OF THE ORDER. WE ARE SURPRISED THAT THE REFUGEES WERE SO GENEROUS TO THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT AND ITS CADRES ON THIS POINT.

26. OVERALL, THESE INTERVIEWS INDICATE THAT CONSIDERABLE TRAUMA AND SHOCK ARE OCCURRING IN VIET-NAM AS A RESULT OF THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICIES. THE DISLOCATIONS APPEAR EXTENSIVE.

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DISAFFECTION SEEMS LIKELY TO BE MASSIVE. LOOMING FURTHER IN THE FUTURE IS THE REACTION TO AGRICULTURAL/COLLECTIVIZATION WHICH IS CERTAIN TO CAUSE FURTHER MAJOR TURMOIL IN VIET-NAM. WHILE THE DISAFFECTION AMONG DELTA FARMERS IS CERTAIN TO BE DEEP, WE CANNOT JUDGE AT THIS POINT ITS IMPACT ON FUTURE REFUGEE FLOW.

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Draft Date: 07 jun 1978
Decapton Date: 01 jan 1960
Decapton Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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